

City Manager presents budget for upcoming fiscal year

By Jo-Ann Jennings

Bixby Editor

joj@southcountyleader.com | Posted: Sunday, May 26, 2013 12:00 am

Describing it as a “relatively conservative budget proposal which allows us to make continued progress on important community and organizational goals, while living within our means,” Bixby City Manager Doug Enevoldsen May 13 provided the Bixby City Council with an overview of the proposed fiscal year 2013-2014 budget.

After approximately an hour of discussion, council members approved the \$7.7 million budget by a vote of 3 -1, with Mayor Ray Bowen and Councilmen Steve Todoroff and Brian Guthrie in favor and Vice-Mayor John Easton opposed. Councilman Dennis Loudermilk was out of town on business.

Budget designed to address critical worker recruitment and retention issues:

Enevoldsen told councilors the City of Bixby’s 100 employee workforce is the leanest municipal workforce in the entire Tulsa Metro area relative to the number of residents served, making the city’s employees its most important asset. Bixby’s population, now estimated at more than 23,000, is still growing.

“Accordingly”, he said, “our FY-14 budget was designed to place special emphasis on critical employment recruitment and retention issues by funding previously-approved multi-year collective bargaining agreements with uniformed employees and providing a comparable overall compensation increase package for the non-uniformed portion of our City workforce”.

Specifically, the FY-14 budget funds 4 percent across-the-board wage increases for members of the International Association of Firefighters union in what will be the second year of a two-year agreement.

That plan established for the first time an automatic pay raise system to reward firefighters for each additional year of service, commonly known as a “step plan”. It also funds a 1 percent increase in the employer contribution to the firefighters pension system, pursuant to new legislation to improve the financial condition of that system.

In addition, the budget provides a 5 percent across-the-board salary increase for Fraternal Order of Police, members, in what is the second year of a three-year bargaining agreement. Finally, it provides a comparable overall increase for the non-uniformed workforce, with specific increases to depend on market comparisons and results of performance evaluations, with particulars still being refined.

The city budget further provides a \$100 increase in one-time annual incentive payments to each full-time city employee and \$40 increase for each part-time employee or those full-time employees having less than one year of service. Finally, it funds all Bixby city employees’ participation in a highly innovative employee wellness program, Care ATC, which is expected to become a model for other employers to follow, improve employees’ health, and mitigate future increases in health care premiums.

Balanced budget

requirement

Oklahoma statutes require municipalities to annually adopt a balanced budget to govern their operations of the forthcoming fiscal year. FY-14 begins on July 1, 2013 and runs through June 30, 2014.

Under the spending plan, the city’s primary operating fund, the general fund, is budgeted to spend \$7,722,415 for governmental operations such as police, fire, streets, and other city expenses, an increase of 5 percent from the revised FY-13 budget. Expenses of the Bixby Public Works Authority, in which the

city's various business-type activities such as water distribution and sanitary sewer operations are budgeted, are set at \$6,521,192, an 8.3 percent increase from the revised FY-13 budget.

Enevoldsen said rather than raise taxes the budget maintains existing tax rates, incorporates anticipated sales tax revenues from new retailers, and relies on increased utility revenues from previously-adopted multi-year rate adjustments required to fund Bixby's growing infrastructure needs.

As a modest extra safeguard, the budget refrains from budgeting for expenditure \$188,393 or 2.3 percent of the available FY-14 general fund revenues to provide an important margin for potential revenue estimate error, as well as to generate year-end savings for potential use in the following year, he added.

Budget Adds One New School Resource Officer and City's first-ever Information Technology Director

Enevoldsen noted the FY-14 budget provides funding for two new full-time positions, the top priority being addition of one new school resource officer (SRO) position to help ensure continued safe conditions within the community's excellent schools.

"We are excited to be partnering with the Bixby Public Schools to provide in the coming year a 50 percent increase in SRO services. Our thanks go out to Superintendant Dr. Kyle Woods, who pledged considerable funding support for this initiative, and without whose support it would not have been possible", Enevoldsen said.

The FY-14 budget also in-sources and expands information technology support for all city departments, through the first-time creation of one IT position, to "improve customer service and enhance workforce safety and productivity throughout the city via improved system reliability, better system integration, and enhanced training", Enevoldson said.

When questioned about the need for such a position, Enevoldsen explained the city had become increasingly reliant on information technology through the years, and that adoption of further IT innovations represents the city's most cost-effective means of keeping up with the service demands of Bixby's rapidly growing population, despite having such a relatively small number of city workers. Police Chief Ike Shirley, City Engineer Jared Cottle, and Public Works Director Bea Aamodt each testified to the need for and many benefits to be gained from creating an internal IT support position.

"While most communities Bixby's size operate with multiple city IT positions on staff to maintain their complex IT systems, Bixby has relied solely on services of a part-time independent contractor, and on the services of an outside web-hosting firm. Both of these contracts would be eliminated under this budget," Enevoldsen said. "In short, we are now a large enough and complex enough organization to require the full-time services of a dedicated IT position, much as a few years ago we found it beneficial to cease relying on a part-time independent contractor for legal services and instead employ a full-time City Attorney," Enevoldsen added. "The addition of an in-house attorney certainly boosted each department's ability to perform its mission more effectively and efficiently, and I have no doubt our investment in a full-time in-house IT position will yield similar dividends."

Following the meeting, City Treasurer Betty Koehn explained the City of Bixby's budgeted FY-14 costs of administration will be no higher than they were five years ago. Moreover, as a share of total expenses, they will be less than in FY-14 than they were five years before, she said.

Sewer/Water Rates Explained

The City Manager further explained that, effective July 1st, City of Bixby sewer customers would see an increase in their monthly sewer bills, as the second of a series of phased-in annual sewer rate hikes kicks in. "These sewer rate hikes were necessary to fund future construction of a new wastewater treatment plant to replace our city's outdated and undersized sewage lagoons, and were made necessary by an impending ODEQ consent order," Enevoldsen said.

Bixby sewer customers consuming on average 2,000 gallons of water per month would see their sewer bills rise by \$2.10 per month, or 7 cents per day. Customers consuming on average 5,000 gallons of water

per month would see their sewer bills rise by \$5.40 per month, or 17 cents per day. Customers consuming on average 10,000 gallons of water per month would see their sewer bills rise by \$10.00 per month, or 32 cents per day.

Enevoldsen said the FY-14 budget also reflects the additional revenues and expenses it expects to incur beginning October 1 when the City of Bixby's supplier of treated water, the City of Tulsa, increases its sales price for treated water by 7 percent. That increase will be passed onto Bixby water customers. More information on Bixby's sewer and water rates can be found on the city's website: www.bixby.com

Equipment and Infrastructure Projects

The new city budget also provides funding for purchase of three new police vehicles, lease-purchase of an improved Police and Fire radio system, street improvements, additional building renovations, and miscellaneous equipment such a Parks mower and pick-up truck, cemetery pick-up truck, and selected replacement computers. Additionally, the budget provides funding for four additional aerators for the city's aged sewer lagoons, specialized camera equipment for viewing underground pipes and funds for water tank maintenance, among other utility system and infrastructure improvements.